

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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STILWELL: SENATE BILL CONTAINS IMPROVED BENEFITS FOR INJURED WORKERS

INDIANAPOLIS – Legislation approved today in the Indiana House contains an amendment authored by State Rep. Russ Stilwell (D-Boonville) that would give Hoosier workers who are injured on the job their first increase in benefits in four years.

Senate Bill 508 now returns to the Indiana Senate to give lawmakers there a chance to concur or dissent with the changes Stilwell and other representatives made to the measure, but Stilwell was optimistic that the worker's compensation benefit improvements now contained in the bill will survive and become law in this year's session.

"The improvements contained in my amendment gained strong bipartisan support in the Indiana House, because representatives on both sides of the aisle recognize the importance in protecting the lives of our most precious economic resource: the hard-working men and women of Indiana," Stilwell said.

"In the past, Republicans and Democrats have been able to reach a consensus in improving benefits for people who have been hurt on the job, as well as those who have lost their jobs, and I am hopeful that we can continue to work together on these critical issues," he continued.

Stilwell's proposal increases worker's compensation benefits in two areas: the average weekly wage paid to an injured worker while he or she is away from the job, and the one-time benefit paid to cover the loss of a limb in a work-related accident.

"Under Senate Bill 508, the average weekly wage will be based on a figure of \$954, which is a 7.9 percent increase over the current level of \$882 per week," Stilwell said. "When this law takes effect, the injured worker will receive two-thirds of that \$954 weekly wage tax free.

"Workers who are injured also receive a one-time benefit if they lose the use of any sort of a limb, ranging from a finger to an arm or leg," he noted. "The benefits are keyed on the degree of impairment, ranging from partial loss all the way to complete loss. In all of these areas, the one-time only benefit will increase by 10 percent."

In addition, the legislation increases the benefit received by the family of a worker who is killed on the job. Stilwell said that total benefit, which is paid out over a 500-week period, will increase by nearly 9 percent from \$294,000 to \$318,000.

"Throughout this session, we have paid a lot of attention to legislation that is designed to bring more economic development to our state," Stilwell said. "We can provide all the tax breaks in the world to get corporations to come here, but they will stay here because Indiana workers are the best in the world.

"One of the ways we provide a quality workforce is by ensuring they have a safe working environment, and by taking care of them when they are unfortunate enough to get into an accident in the workplace," he added. "By joining together with business, we are able to pass legislation that shows we care for our working men and women. I hope that philosophy will pave the way for Senate Bill 508 to become law this session."

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